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To: Local Public Health Departments  
Southeast Region

From: Mark Wegner, M.D., M.P.H.  
Bureau of Communicable Diseases

Subject: Pertussis

Based on information sent to the Wisconsin Immunization Program it appears there is a significant increase in incidence of pertussis in Southeastern Wisconsin. Since January 1, 2004 the Immunization Program has received reports on 54 cases of confirmed or probable pertussis in Southeastern Wisconsin. This does not include cases that are awaiting laboratory results or are under investigation. The number of confirmed and probable cases reported to date since January 1, 2004 greatly exceeds the single case reported during the same time period in 2003. While cases are being reported throughout the region, the majority of cases appears to be in the southcentral portion of the region (i.e., southwestern Milwaukee County, southeastern Waukesha County, western Racine and Kenosha Counties and eastern Walworth County).

Please share this information with health care providers in your area. Health care providers are encouraged to implement the following recommendations when seeing patients of any age that present with respiratory symptoms.

- **Diagnosis:** Consider pertussis when evaluating any patient with an acute cough illness characterized by a prolonged cough or cough with paroxysms, whoop or post-tussive gagging/vomiting. Infants may present with apnea and/or cyanosis. There is generally no fever and the cough is often worse at night and cough medicines usually do not help alleviate the symptoms.
- **Nasopharyngeal Specimen:** Collect nasopharyngeal specimens on suspect cases. Please see the attached [Diagnostic Test](#) guide
- **Treatment:** The treatment for a suspect case of pertussis is outlined in the attached [Treatment and Chemoprophylaxis](#) guide. Suspect cases that are symptomatic and are being treated should be excluded from school, work or day care for the first 5 days of antibiotic treatment. In addition, all household member and exposed close contacts should be prophylactically treated. Exposure is defined as face-to-face contact, direct contact with respiratory, oral or nasal secretions or being in the same room with a coughing pertussis case-patient. When pertussis is occurring in the community and /or there is an epidemiologic

linkage to a case, it is important to initiate treatment upon suspicion of pertussis and not wait for the test results.

- **Immunization:** All children below 7 years of age who are unimmunized or under immunized should receive DTaP vaccine.
- **Reporting:** Suspected cases of pertussis should be reported to the local public health department as soon as possible. Pertussis is a category 1 communicable disease that must be reported within 24 hours of suspicion of illness.